

the appeal will take place. My proposal will mean saving a lot of time and the procedure suggested is in accordance with the practice in most courts.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I suggest that the amendment, when moved, be made alternative, and that the appeal be by way of rehearing or of case stated. It is possible that if the amendment be agreed to as proposed, grave injustice may be done to some party. In some instances, if the dispute does not concern matters of fact, the appeal will be by way of case stated. At times, however, with the consent of both parties, it would be better for the appeal to be by way of rehearing.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: My object is to secure finality as quickly as possible, so as to avoid additional friction.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: Why should we limit the powers of the higher court? I would like to see the Arbitration Court as supreme as possible in these matters, and I cannot see why the court should be hampered as to the methods to be adopted in appeals. If the matter in dispute merely involved a point of law, the appeal could be by way of a case stated, but in many instances where questions of fact were involved, it would be better to secure a rehearing, so that the court may judge from the demeanour of witnesses as to the facts. It would be as well to provide both means of appeal. I do not agree, however, with the suggestion that the consent of both parties should be secured. One side might decline to give the permission and thus hold up an appeal.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: As it appears to be the general view that the two methods of appeal should be provided, I will move my amendment in the following form:—

*That after "rehearing" in line 2 of proposed subsection 2 the words "or by case stated" be inserted.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have no objection to the amendment in that form.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 29—agreed to.

Clause 30—Amendment of Section 81:

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I move an amendment—

*That in line 4 of the first proviso the words "think fit" be struck out and "direct" inserted in lieu.*

It is impossible for us to know what the court may "think," but we may know what the court will direct.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: As the legislation stands now, provision is made for awards covering a period of three years. The award may be reviewed after a period of

12 months but no provision is made for a revision during the subsequent 12 months. The amendment proposed in the Bill does not make the position clear. I want to provide that the award may be subject to revision at the end of the second year. For that reason, I move an amendment—

*That in line 1 of the second proviso, after "expiration of," the words "the first" be inserted; after "award" in line 2 the words "and after the expiration of any subsequent period of 12 months" be inserted, and in line 6, after "vary" the words "or rescind" be inserted.*

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 31—agreed to.

Progress reported.

## BILL—MINING DEVELOPMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

*House adjourned at 10.1 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 3rd December, 1924.*

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m. and read prayers.

## QUESTION—RAILWAYS, MR. W. N. HEDGES' PROPOSAL.

Mr. TAYLOR (for Mr. J. H. Smith) asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to a proposal made by Mr. W. N. Hedges in the "West Australian" of 22nd October for constructing agricultural railways on a new basis? 2, If so, will he have trial surveys made over the different suggested routes and submit that gentleman's scheme to the Railway Advisory Board for report thereon?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, Yes. The matter will be considered.

### QUESTION—PRISONERS' TRANS- PORT.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Is he aware that a sensational attempt was made to escape from custody at the Fremantle railway station yesterday morning? 2, If so, will he reconsider the question of providing a safer and more humane system of transporting prisoners between Fremantle gaol and Perth lock-up?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, I am aware that there was an attempted escape. 2, The present system is not inhumane, and is reasonably safe. A proposal to use a motor van has been considered, but the cost is too great.

### BILL—MINING DEVELOPMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: Practically the whole of the criticism upon the Estimates dealing with the Department of Justice was confined to various matters connected with the organisation of the various offices. It was suggested, amongst other things, that the Parliamentary Draftsman should have considerably more time placed at his disposal in order that he might attend particularly to the duties of that office, and might not be tied down by the duties of the other positions he occupies. Under the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, the Registrar of Titles is not required to be a legal practitioner. When dealing with land registered under the Act it is not essential that the officer should be a legally qualified man. In the case, however, of unregistered land being brought under the operation of the Act it is essential that he should have legal qualifications. Our Act provides for the appointment of a commissioner of titles and an examiner of titles, both of which offices must be filled by duly qualified legal practitioners. The office of examiner of titles has never been filled, the duties having been at all times performed by the Commissioner of Titles. The Commissioner of Titles, however, is also the Solicitor General, as well as the Parliamentary Draftsman. If this Bill passes we shall be able to appoint a man who has legal qualifications, which are absolutely essential to the position of commissioner of titles, and take the work away from the present occupant of the position, who will then be

able to give more time to the important duties of Parliamentary Draftsman and Solicitor General. As lands have been brought under the Land Act the necessity for a qualified legal practitioner has not been so apparent, because it is not necessary to have a man with legal knowledge in charge of that work. It is only when dealing with matters such as conveyances and the like that such qualifications are required. Although a certain amount of work is done in connection with land that is outside the Act, the majority of transfers of land that are now going through relate to land that has been brought under the Transfer of Land Act, and the process is therefore comparatively simple. The two senior officers who have been retired from the position of Registrar of Titles are Mr. Burt and Mr. Glyde. It is considered to be in the interests of the public, of economy and efficiency, at this stage to amalgamate the positions of Commissioner of Titles and Registrar of Titles. If the position of Commissioner of Titles were abolished, the Registrar of Titles would have to be a legal man, or there would have to be some other legal practitioner whether in combination with those offices or otherwise. An alteration of the present system would require that the Registrar of Titles should be a qualified legal practitioner. This would enable the positions of Commissioner and Examiner of Titles and Registrar of Titles to be held conjointly. The only drawback to this would be with the people who are at present employed in the Lands Titles Office. They would reach a sort of dead-end. They could rise by successive stages to the position of assistant registrar, but could not attain the position either of registrar or commissioner unless they had legal qualifications. The present system is very unsatisfactory. The Solicitor General, who is also Commissioner of Titles, has his office in the Supreme Court buildings. Any business that is done in connection with the transfer of land that is outside the scope of the Transfer of Land Act has to be referred to the Commissioner of Titles, whose office is away from the buildings where the ordinary land business is conducted, and who, on many occasions, is occupied with other important business and is unable to see persons desirous of putting through some transfer. The present occupant of the position does all that is possible to meet the convenience of the public, but serious inconvenience does take place, which would be obviated if we had a man with the necessary qualifications holding the positions of commissioner and registrar of titles in the Land Titles Office. There is no commissioner of titles in any of the other States. Victoria has a chief examiner and registrar and there is a number of assistant registrars. In New South Wales the registrar is also the registrar general,

and there is a registrar of joint-stock companies and there are deputy registrars. In South Australia the crown solicitor is also solicitor to the titles office, and there is a registrar of deeds. In Tasmania there is a recorder of titles and a deputy recorder. Many of the matters dealt with are very important because of the titles that people have to property having to be dealt with by a man fully conversant with such things, particularly when the land is outside the Transfer of Land Act. These questions have to be dealt with by the Commissioner of Titles. I do not think there will be any objection to the proposal for the amalgamation of the two positions, because it will mean greater efficiency and greater convenience. Had it not been that in the early days we did not have a transfer of Land Act and that practically all the property transferred from one party to another was by way of conveyance or some other method, the two positions would not have been necessary. If the proposal be agreed to, the difficulty will be removed from those responsible for the appointments and the Government and the Public Service Commissioner will have an open hand to allot the offices in the best interests of the work. These proposals will mean greater convenience for the legal profession and others interested in this work, while it will secure greater efficiency as well. In bringing forward these proposals, the Crown law officers, the present Commissioner of Titles and the late Registrar of Titles, who had a most intimate knowledge of the working of the department, have all been consulted, and they concur as to the necessity for the change. I hope the House will agree to the Bill, for it contains nothing of a controversial nature. I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

## BILL.—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.47] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is a small one and I hope the discussion on it will not be adjourned, because the matter dealt with is urgent. It has been represented to me that the amendments proposed are required, not only by the department, but by fruitgrowers, several deputations from whom have waited upon me during the last few months to discuss this question. Section 9 of the Plant Diseases Act, 1914, provides that an inspector may enter upon an orchard at any time for the purpose of making an inspection and under Section 10 the inspector is empowered,

when satisfied that a disease exists in any orchard, to require by requisition the owner or occupier to do whatever is necessary to eradicate the disease and to prevent its spread. When the disease is not a common one and is likely to escape the notice of, or to be beyond the knowledge of, the owner or occupier, no change of procedure is desired or contemplated by the Bill. When, however, the disease is of such a nature that its presence cannot fail to be detected, it is only reasonable that the owner or the occupier shall be required to take action immediately, without waiting for an inspector to serve a notice. The Bill contains an amendment to serve that purpose. An occupier of an infested orchard will have no difficulty in ascertaining what measures are necessary for treating a disease. When any doubt arises as to what course is to be followed, the owner or occupier has only to make application to the department and the necessary advice will be made available at once. Should an inspector be available, he will be sent out to investigate and give the advice personally if necessary.

Mr. Taylor: That is, on the application of the owner.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and that applies to diseases difficult to determine. It will be noted that if the owner complies with Section 8 of the Plant Diseases Act, he will communicate with the department within 24 hours after becoming aware of the presence of a disease in his orchard. When he has done that, the fullest advice will be given to him as to the treatment to be followed. In Western Australia at the present time, the worst disease affecting fruit, as distinct from the diseases affecting fruit trees, is undoubtedly the Mediterranean fruit fly, and its effect on fruit is only too well known. Its discovery is very easy, because its presence is shown in the fruit which becomes fly blown just as a piece of meat can be blown. While the disease is the worst affecting our fruit, it is the most easily discovered. It is not difficult to deal with if the orchardists take the necessary steps. For years the inspectors of the Agricultural Department have taken steps to secure the eradication of the pest and good results have been achieved.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have been very successful.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes; inasmuch as large areas in the South-West are now free from fruit fly. That is more particularly so, because the people in the area are largely dependent upon orchards for their livelihood.

Mr. Sampson: And because the atmosphere there is colder.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That may be so, but I am not in a position to say whether that assertion is correct. A great quantity of fruit is destroyed annually by the pest in districts within 80 miles of Perth. In that area the population is thick-

est and the fact that such a great toll of fruit is taken is mainly due to the non-commercial orchards that are in existence. They are owned by people who grow a few fruit trees for their own purposes and make no provision whatever for eradicating the fruit-fly. These people represent a danger to the orchardists who make a living from the industry. While they endeavour to keep their orchards clean, they are adversely affected by the persons growing a few trees in adjoining districts. The department has not enough inspectors to deal with all these orchards and the work is urgent, because the chief difficulty is confined to the fruit season, which covers a few months. During that period it is necessary to take steps to deal with the pest. It is essential that we should have some form of compulsion to make the owners comply with the requirements of the Act. The Bill, therefore, provides that any occupier of an infested orchard who does not take the necessary steps to control the disease, shall be guilty of an offence and will be liable to prosecution when an inspector finds that such neglect has taken place. It is not for the owner or the occupier to wait until the inspector gives notice to him, but as soon as he ascertains that his trees are affected by the disease, the owner or the occupier must take action. I am hopeful that few prosecutions will be required to cause the people, who occupy infested orchards, to live up to their responsibilities. The Bill also provides that the method of treatment shall be prescribed by way of regulation. Some objection has been taken to Bills containing references to regulations.

Mr. Teesdale: You raised a few objections yourself.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No. I have been guilty of many sins of omission and commission, but I have not taken any such action.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have a bad memory! You made a four-hours' speech on that question.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not on the regulations. If I had been confined to the regulations that speech would never have been made.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I will look up "Hansard" for you.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is necessary to keep in touch with scientific research work. The methods of to-day may be improved upon by the treatment advocated to-morrow. That has been shown in New Zealand in connection with the treatment of woolly aphis in apples. A new method of treatment has been discovered and that has taken the place of the earlier one. It is impossible to fix in legislation the method of treatment, because it may be later discovered that an improved method of treatment can be adopted. For that reason the Bill provides power to prescribe by regulation the treatment necessary for the time

being. If a new treatment is discovered we shall be able to give effect to it by way of regulation. I expect the support of the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) for this Bill. It is an entirely non-party measure and has been brought forward largely at the instance of that hon. member who has introduced deputations urging this Bill. In addition I have been urged to introduce the measure by the officers of my department, so that the trouble may be tackled. This is the time of the year when the fruit fly is most active and it can be dealt with most effectively now. I ask members not to adjourn the discussion of the measure, but to enable us to pass it through the Committee stage this afternoon. I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We have not been able to hear all you have said and we have only just got the Bill. I move—

*That the debate be adjourned.*

The Minister for Agriculture: Let us deal with the Bill now.

Mr. Sampson: But we could not hear what you said about the non-commercial orchards.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. DAVY (West Perth) [4.58]: The Bill has only just been distributed and we have not had time to see what the clauses contain. If the Bill deals mainly with the fruit fly, would it not be better to make it clear that it relates to that pest only. There has been considerable adverse criticism regarding the utilisation of regulations for the purpose of law-making, and members of the present Government have expressed themselves adversely from time to time when that matter has been before the House. It may be quite sound to say that it would not be feasible to provide that certain methods should be adopted as the methods of treatment vary from time to time. It seems a lot to ask that the diseases to which the Bill will apply shall be mentioned!

The Minister for Agriculture: That is in the Act.

Mr. DAVY: The Bill provides that Section 8 of the Act is to be amended by the insertion of a new section to provide among other things that the diseases to which the section shall apply are "such diseases as are for the time declared by any regulation to be subject to the provisions of this section."

The Minister for Agriculture: That is the 1914 Act.

Mr. DAVY: But the Bill indicates that the diseases must be prescribed by regulation. Perhaps the Minister will deal with this matter when replying. As it is in-

tended to restrict the application of the Bill to one disease for the time being, I suggest that that disease be stated in a schedule to the Bill. Then that schedule could be amended when desired to bring further diseases within the scope of the measure.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.1]: These Bills are brought down and we are expected to deal with them before we have had time to read them. It was only while the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) was speaking that I had opportunity to read the measure. I have no objection to commercial orchardists being required to comply with the proposed regulations, but I doubt whether those having only one or two fruit trees should be made to submit to the same regulations. Those people ought to be treated with some consideration. Every man ought to have his own vine and fig tree.

The Minister for Agriculture: And they ought to be sprayed, just as much as his roses are sprayed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the disease is there, of course the trees must be sprayed.

The Minister for Agriculture: Only in one or two places, not the whole of the tree.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We must spray in accordance with the regulations. The Minister for Agriculture: It is not difficult.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But it is sometimes very troublesome.

Mr. Teesdale: We spray our trees every week, three of them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No wonder they don't bear fruit! I know another gentleman who has an orchard. He does not spray; notwithstanding which he gets wonderful fruit. In embracing all diseases the Bill goes too far. Since it is merely desired to deal with the fruit fly, I agree with the member for West Perth that the Bill ought to be confined to fruit fly. Then there is in the Bill a most objectionable provision. It is provided that it shall be no defence to a prosecution if the owner is able to show that he did not know the disease existed. That, surely, is bad law. An innocent person can be fined £25.

Mr. Teesdale: I agree with you there. He should be given one notice before being fined.

The Minister for Agriculture: The man who really does not know will not be fined. The man we are after is he who does know, but says he does not know.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is all very well, but we have to deal with the Bill as it comes before us. Of course it is comforting to be told that the man who really does not know of the disease

will not be prosecuted; still, that is not in the Bill. The Minister will have, say, 20 fruit inspectors in various parts of the State, each of whom will, if necessary, prosecute. I do not see how we are to expect the inspector to satisfy himself that the fruit-grower actually did not know there was disease in his orchard. I do not suppose the fruit-grower will be persecuted, but really the Bill provides for it. We are asked too much when asked to approve of this provision. Knowledge of fruit diseases is not very general, is certainly not likely to be possessed by the grower of only one or two fruit trees. However, I will not oppose the second reading. In Committee to-morrow we shall have to consider the position further.

Mr. SAMPSON (Swan) [5.7]: I am glad the Bill has been brought down, for the Minister has been urged to provide for control in respect of plant diseases. Fruit fly is the worst of all such diseases in this State, and is the most costly. Apparently the climate of Perth is entirely favourable to the propagation of the fruit fly, whereas in the more rigorous conditions of the South-West the pest does not develop to any great extent. Still there is the danger of the fruit fly being conveyed from Perth to the South-West. For years past desultory efforts have been made to wipe out the fruit fly. Some 12 years ago a zealous inspector visited Peel's 10-mile Well on the Rockingham road, and destroyed some splendid fig and mulberry trees on the score that the fruit was carrying fruit fly. Personally, I have never found fruit fly in either mulberries or figs, although I have looked for it hundreds of times. We know it will live in the orange and that certain flower seeds act as a carry-over. Out at Spearwood a successful effort has recently been made to control the fruit fly. A community arrangement was entered into, each orchardist paying his share of the cost of regular spraying. The Bill will make it obligatory on the orchardist to spray, and the detection of fruit fly will render an orchardist liable to a penalty. The careless orchardist is a menace to his fellows, for he provides sufficient fruit flies to infect the trees of his more careful neighbour. I recall reading in a Victorian newspaper of what happened respecting an outbreak of the Mediterranean fly in Victoria. The growers suffered sorely, particularly those in the Sunraysia districts—Mildura and elsewhere. Compensation was provided by the State for all the sufferers but three. Those three had put in manifestly unfair claims, and so the Director of Agriculture recommended that no payment be made to them. The need for compulsory spraying and full control is keenly felt. Every orchardist will be glad that the Minister has brought down the Bill. It will make control very much

easier than at present. Hitherto the inspectors have not had the necessary power, and consequently the fruit fly, which can be controlled, has increased in many districts. I hope that with the amendment suggested by the Leader of the Opposition the Bill will be approved.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [5.15]: I support the second reading. I am glad the Minister has introduced the Bill. In past years the fruit fly has caused great loss in my district. So bad was it in the Guildford district particularly that the municipal council took the matter up and by raising special funds under special conditions, the details of which I need not explain, they were able to put on a man to go through the various orchards and do the spraying for the ratepayers. The funds were raised by the ratepayers and I remember having taken exception at a ratepayers' meeting to the fact that ratepayers who had no fruit trees and gained practically no benefit should be called upon to pay for the spraying, as well as for the material used in other people's orchards. Those present, however, convinced me that even if it was unjust, it was in the interests of the district that a special penalty should be imposed upon the whole of the ratepayers, in order to maintain the cleanliness of the orchards. I welcome the Bill because it will obviate the necessity of the municipal council continuing work which is not a part of its responsibility, and because the expense to which the council has been put will be avoided. Ratepayers in future will be called upon to do their own spraying and keep their own orchards clean. The Minister has not been able to enforce cleanliness of orchards owing to the lack of such a measure as this. I hope the Bill will be passed so that the cleanliness of orchards will be the responsibility of those who own them, and not a burden upon other ratepayers.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## BILL—FAIR RENTS.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Mr. MANN (Perth) [5.18]: In speaking to the second reading of the Bill—

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why speak?

Mr. MANN: Does the hon. member want it all his own way? I feel that some measure is necessary to control the actions of certain landlords who have interests in my electorate.

The Minister for Justice: And in other electorates, too.

Mr. MANN: There may be similar instances in other electorates; I cannot speak

for them, but I do know of instances of hardship that have occurred in Perth.

The Premier: Worse than hardship, barefaced robbery.

Mr. MANN: The Minister, however, has gone to the other extreme of severity, and is running a very great risk of losing a Bill that may have been made of some service.

The Minister for Justice: What is wrong with it?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is right with the blessed thing?

Mr. MANN: The Minister proposes to establish a court, and his first act is to tie the hands of the court in the matter of its jurisdiction. Thus, he alienates support he would otherwise get. I intend to support the second reading in the hope that the Minister will be reasonable in Committee and will accept amendments to some of the clauses. Some landlords seem to have run mad. On the other hand, there are reasonable landlords who have been satisfied with a fair return on their investment.

The Minister for Justice: I said the same thing.

Mr. MANN: Case after case has been brought under my notice. People have been almost desperate in their attempts to secure relief and have found it impossible to do so. A man took premises that were of little or no value, and after years of hard work he established a good business. When he was on the point of reaping some benefit from his work, the landlord stepped in and raised his rent 100 per cent. It was not possible for him to continue under that impost and he had to leave the premises, which have been vacant ever since. There have been several such cases. One reason for the increase of rents is that the busy part of the city area is so restricted, bounded as it is by the river, the railway, Pier-street and Melbourne-road. That is the brisk business part of the city, and there is a big demand for business premises. If a man is fortunate enough to have a lease, he may continue during the term of his lease, but he has to be prepared to face an advance when the term expires. We must expect some advances in rents. Business is increasing, the value of property is increasing, and if a man is doing a bigger volume of business he must expect to pay higher rent. Of course there is a margin beyond which he cannot go. Other instances of excessive rents involving hardship relate to women conducting lodging-houses. I know of several widows who have received compensation for the death of the husband and have invested the money in lodging-houses. They have secured premises at 25s. or 30s. a week, which showed them a fair margin of profit, but before long they have been faced by an increase of rent to the extent of £1 or £1 10s. a week. In one instance I saw the landlords about the in-

crease. They were two brothers; one was reasonable and was prepared to consider the matter; the other was not reasonable. He said he could get a better price for the property if he sold it.

The Premier: That is what they all argue!

Mr. MANN: I feel it my duty to support the second reading, but I hope the Minister will not put the iron rod around those benches. I hope he will give reasonable consideration to any amendments proposed in Committee.

The Premier: Why those benches? We have no control over them.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: I should be glad to control them for you.

Mr. MANN: Members on this side have repeatedly tried to get amendments accepted, but have been unsuccessful owing to the block voting system adopted on the Government side.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not reflect upon the votes of the House.

Mr. MANN: If the Minister is reasonable in Committee, the Bill may be made a good measure, but in its present form it is unworkable and the Minister is running the risk of losing it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.25]: It is difficult to frame a Fair Rents Bill that could be fair. I sympathise with the Minister in the task of preparing the Bill. There are so many things to be considered. Many of those things, apparently, have escaped the Minister's notice.

The Minister for Justice: And a lot of them I found out, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not many.

The Premier: The trouble is to provide for them. You can find them out all right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Minister provided for all he has found out, no doubt he would have a big Bill, and if he provided for the things he has not found out but has been told by other people, the Bill would be still bigger. Everywhere in the Empire house property presents a difficulty. Thank God it is so, because it means more people are setting up housekeeping, more children are being born, more of our own race are coming into the world. No bachelor needs a house, so the demand for houses arises from more people being married. The parsons have been busy and the Empire is growing. House rent to the worker is a very important matter. When he pays his rent each week, he must feel he is not getting very much for it.

The Minister for Justice: He feels that more is being taken from him than he can afford.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Possibly, and the receiver of the rent probably feels

that he is not receiving enough interests on his investment.

The Minister for Justice: Oh!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister has got it into his mind that everyone who lets a house makes a good deal out of it. I have had some experience of house property and it was not very satisfactory.

The Minister for Justice: So have I.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Was your experience satisfactory?

The Minister for Justice: Not too satisfactory.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is poetic justice! I did not keep mine long; it was not at all a satisfactory investment. At times there is a great demand for houses. If building operations in Perth ceased tomorrow, there would be plenty of houses available, because so many people are engaged in the building of houses and are themselves occupying houses. I hope building activity will continue because it means progress. In William-street many buildings are being erected. This is a point the Minister has overlooked. The cost of house rent is governed, firstly, by the rate of interest that the landowner has to pay for the money, and, secondly, by the cost of erecting the building. If, as I am told, there is a limit to the number of bricks a bricklayer may lay, that has an effect upon house rents. Such a limitation may not matter very much to a rich man who is building one house for himself; but it does matter very much to the poor man if his house is made to cost £50 more because of that limitation.

Mr. Millington: You get the bricks laid for less than £50.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It depends on the size of the house. I do not know what the building of a room costs now, on the average. Some years ago the cost was about £50 per room for a fairly decent house. I have been told that the cost at the present day is about £100 per room. The great thing is to bring the cost of building down, and that will not be done by the passage of a Bill of this sort. The Workers' Homes Board have done wonderful work, and the people who secured workers' homes are very fortunate. I should like to see every man with anything like permanent employment in Perth owning his house. But we cannot get over the existing trouble by such a Bill as this. We want more houses; we want to encourage people to put their money into houses. No doubt, if 8 per cent. in addition to rates and taxes and repairs were obtainable from substantially built houses, the owners would think they were doing well, especially at times when money was cheap. To-day, of course, money is dear, as the Treasurer knows.

The Premier: To-day the Commonwealth Bank rate went up  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., to 7 per cent.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No man would to-day borrow money to build houses subject to the limitation imposed by this Bill. So that rents may be reduced, we must have more houses built, and built more cheaply. I fully recognise that it must be very difficult for a man earning £4 or £5 or even £6 a week to pay out £1 or even 15s. at the end of the week for rent. Nothing can possibly be cheaper for the working man than a worker's home if the private owner of houses is to be allowed to get any reasonable return. The erection of so many workers' homes put up the cost of building here. Perth in general has done a great deal of building during the past two or three years, with the result that costs have advanced. The Treasurer has said that he will put an amount on the Loan Estimates for the Workers' Homes Board. The building of war service homes having ceased, more workers' homes can be erected without further raising the cost of building.

The Premier: The trouble is that money is so dear.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. Our only chance of getting cheap money is to get it from London. It must be got from there somehow or other, and I hope the present difficulty will soon be overcome. I think the Premier could get money at 5 per cent. in London. Probably, if he were there himself, he could get an overdraft at a lesser rate until such time as the exchanges permitted the transfer of funds from London to Western Australia. Certainly we have no chance of getting cheap money in the Commonwealth. The money is not here to lend to Governments; and if the Governments got it, they would be interfering with the investments of private people in the very houses that we want built. I can assure the people renting houses nowadays that there is no comfort for them in this Bill, not even to the extent of shillings or pence in the weekly rents they pay. Employers surely recognise that the cost of living has some bearing on rates of wages, and that the country which houses its workers cheaply has more chance of producing cheaply than the country in which house rents are high. But this proposed legislation is bad in many ways. The Bill provides that the rent shall be based on the cost of the land and the buildings. It has happened that 60 years ago Perth land was bought at a very cheap price. I believe that within the memory of Mr. Clifton, formerly Under Secretary for Lands, the block on which Foy & Gibson's building now stands was sold for £7 10s. If any part of that block still happened to belong to the original purchaser, the rentals he would be allowed to charge would be based on 8 per cent. on £7 10s. plus the cost of the buildings. But the purchaser of yesterday would get interest on the amount of the purchase price.

The Minister for Justice: The owners would get the same rate.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would have been utterly impossible to put that land to any very profitable use until within the last few years, comparatively speaking. Take the £7 10s. paid 60 years ago: with interest, the cost of the land would to-day be a great deal. At compound interest amounts increase very rapidly. But it would be very bad legislation to say to this block of tenants that because the owner bought the land 60 years ago their rent is to be fixed on one scale, and to say to the next block of tenants that because the owner bought yesterday they are to pay rent on a different scale. The basis must be the value of the land and the buildings to-day.

The Minister for Justice: But values can be increased very rapidly.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course the hypothetical case I put up is ridiculous. Perth has progressed. Buildings are being pulled down to-day in William-street. I do not know how often the land in question has been built upon, but at least for the second time buildings to suit the demands of the day are being erected on it. The owners, in order to keep in step with the progress of the city, have to erect a different class of building. How is the cost of the land and the buildings to be determined in such a case? Sydney, I am told, has been built three times in 20 years, rebuilt because it paid to scrap buildings not altogether suitable and erect buildings entirely suitable. Obviously, the cost of the land 30 or 40 years ago, plus the cost of the buildings now being erected, would not be the true cost of the property to the owner.

The Minister for Justice: If the owner has pulled a building down and put another up, it goes on to the cost of the land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not read that into the Bill.

The Minister for Justice: It is there. If he has rebuilt, he is to have the cost of two buildings.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is not in this Bill.

The Minister for Justice: Yes, it is.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Bill says "the actual cost of the building."

The Minister for Justice: To the owner.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is what the Bill says; but, obviously, that is not quite right. Then, again, this legislation is to be made retrospective. Existing leases are to be set aside as if they did not exist at all. That, I am sure, the House will not agree to. It may well be that the parties to a lease are satisfied. Further, under this Bill it will not be possible to have a longer lease than two years.



The Minister for Justice: If both parties are satisfied, nobody will take action. One side has to initiate action.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister is optimistic. I do not think any man would care to try and develop a new business on a lease of two years. From one hon. member we had some account of a man who took a building and developed a business, and who, after he had developed the business, had his rent put up by the landlord. However, it would be quite right for a landlord to say to a man endeavouring to develop a new business, "There is some risk to be taken, and so I will let you have the premises at a lower rental until you can pay more; but when your business is established, you must pay me a reasonable rent." I know that has been so and others are aware that landlords have taken some risk in the establishment of a business which they knew would be good later. We naturally object to the limiting of the term of a lease at a known rental for two years. Why does the Minister wish to set up these restrictions? He wants to get for the people fair weekly payments, but all these conditions that he puts in will mean nothing to the man renting a cottage. He is trying to do half a dozen things when it is only required that he shall do one. The other five are proving merely an annoyance to everyone living under the laws of the land. The Bill is not good even if the objects be good. There are other and better ways of doing what the Government desire. We have been told that fair rents legislation has not succeeded in the Old Country nor in New South Wales.

The Minister for Lands: It has succeeded in the Old Country all right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It applies there to higher rentals only.

The Minister for Lands: It applies to lower rentals as well.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister did not contradict the member for West Perth when he made a statement to that effect.

The Minister for Justice: I could not keep butting in all the time.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Rents were not raised in England during the war period, but a limitation was put upon the profits so that probably a man who owned a house received less than he should have got and the man who occupied it got more than he ought to have received. I do not believe that the Bill, if it be passed, will do a scrap of good. It will not do any good to the poorer people and neither will it be of advantage to the cottage holder. It is impossible to introduce a Fair Rents Bill that will be really fair, because it cannot possibly be fair to anybody. The Minister when introducing the Bill, relied chiefly upon two or three cases that he was able to cite.

The Minister for Justice: I was quoting the Commonwealth Statistician's figures.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We know that in the principal streets of the city the business premises there—and this is not peculiar to Perth only; it applies to all the other capital cities of Australia—have been built and re-built not once, but two or three times. If a man has invested his money in such a way as to meet the changed conditions, we should have some consideration for him. The Minister has failed to show us that the measure will do any good. If he expects the House to pass it he should demonstrate the manner in which it will be an advantage. Restrictive legislation ought not to be lightly undertaken and nothing should be done to deter people from building houses. I should like to see assistance given to those who have permanent employment and limited incomes, assistance in the direction of providing their own homes. The Minister for Works once discussed with me the question of wooden houses and it was decided to have some built. I have not heard whether they were a success, but they certainly did provide accommodation that was necessary, and the price was kept down to a reasonable figure, a price that the working man could afford to pay. The only way to cheapen rent is to build more houses. I have no doubt that the Minister for Justice has spent a lot of time in the preparation of this Bill, but he has not succeeded in turning out a measure that will do for the people all that he hopes to accomplish.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [5.52]: I intend to support the measure. We should approach it from the point of view as to whether the opposition to it is sound, and whether it is a practical proposition to control rents. The rents in Perth in many cases have been so increased as to justify the introduction of a measure of this description. I do not propose to go into the question whether an investor should get eight or ten per cent. That will be a matter for the Committee stage. In a Bill of this description it is difficult to so draft it that it will escape criticism, because there is such a divided opinion in regard to the rights of investors as compared with the rights of those people who are the patrons of the investors. The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) devoted a great deal of time to placing before the House the point of view of the investor and the property owner. He based his main opposition to the Bill on the question of supply and demand. He said that the farmer did not accept less than the full market value for his wheat. Unfortunately, the farmer does not know what is the full market value of wheat, and it is unfortunate also that the State Government cannot protect him in that regard. Neither is it possible for the National Government to protect him. That the farmer is exploited in regard to his

wheat there can be no doubt. When we see the market controlled and the fluctuations that take place from day to day, we know that an injustice is being perpetrated so far as the farmers are concerned. It can be taken that the farmer never gets the full value for his wheat; he has to accept what the market declares, but who is responsible for that declaration, it has never been possible to find out. All that we know is that our wheat is consumed by millions of people and that a few score are able to fix the price that the millions shall pay. Not only do they do that, but they also fix the price that the producer shall get for that which he produces. Therefore, there cannot be any comparison such as that drawn by the member for West Perth. It is no use saying that, because we cannot help the farmer with regard to his wheat, we can do nothing for those who pay exorbitant rents. The hon. member also told us that the labourer would not accept less than the full market price for his labour. Unfortunately he cannot fix the market price for his labour. It is because his labour is fixed by a tribunal that we are justified in bringing measures of this description before Parliament. If it is decided that a tribunal shall determine the amount of food that has to be given to a family, the kind of home that has to be occupied in order to make life bearable, surely the lesser question whether an investor is to have unlimited scope with regard to the fixing of rents ought to be controlled in a similar way. The position ought to be handled in just the same way as wages are controlled.

Mr. Latham: Don't you think that the Workers' Homes Board limit that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I will deal with that in due course. The member for West Perth said also that the whole question was one of supply and demand. Has the hon. member ever heard of cold storage, and does he not know full well that supply and demand do not control? Cold storage of meat, for instance, can regulate the position, irrespective of supply and demand.

Mr. Davy: It does not alter the law of supply and demand; it alters the supply.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: To-day we have a great production of potatoes and if the law of supply and demand operated, we would find that the production of potatoes was out of all proportion to the demand and the potatoes would be selling at a very low rate. The cold storages take thousands of bags of potatoes and keep them in store and so prevent the operation of the law of supply and demand.

Mr. Davy: No. It is to conserve the supplies.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If there is a big production of potatoes the price will be less than if there is only a limited quantity. The demand is regulated by the price of commodities, particularly foodstuffs. If the price is low the demand is great, and

the price is low when the quantity is great. If the price is high the demand is proportionately less. In order to prevent the operations of the law of supply and demand, thousands of bags of potatoes are removed from the market when they are cheap, so that when potatoes are high in price a certain quantity will be available at the comparatively higher rate.

Mr. Latham: Is this not to prevent the waste of the commodity?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not say whether this is sound or unsound. In many instances the law of supply and demand does not operate. It certainly has been abrogated in the matter of cold storage. In the matter of meat we have cold storage on a huge scale. This sort of thing is going on in connection with trusts that control various commodities. The result is that generally speaking the law of supply and demand does not operate to-day in general commerce to any great extent. The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) said that the shortage of houses was purely the cause of high rents. He does not deny that the rentals are high.

Mr. Davy: I admitted it for the sake of argument.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Possibly the hon. member would argue that rents are not high, if he had the opportunity of so doing. In his speech, however, he did not argue that rents were not high, but he justified high rents by saying that the investor was not getting too much for the money he had laid out. The limited number of houses was at one time a matter of grave concern. It was decided that additional houses should be erected. Many thousands of pounds were spent in building workers' homes. These relieved the situation at the time, but it afterwards became impossible for the State to continue laying out that money. The war broke out, and all investments ceased. The workers had to put up with the limited number of houses available and await a more favourable opportunity. Had the principle of building houses been continued, the investor would not have had the same opportunity of obtaining high rates of interest on his investments, such as is the case to-day. It was the outbreak of war and the stoppage in respect to workers' homes that created the difficulty the Bill seeks to overcome. Surely that position should be taken into consideration. The worker is suffering because of the effects of the war. He carried great burdens throughout the war period, and even to-day the worker is contributing more than his fair share of taxation to State and Federal Government. The State could not go on building workers' homes because of the financial stringency. The shortage of houses inevitably led to an increase in the rents. Is it fair that the investor should have the advantage of all this? Is the worker to have no consideration? He did all the

fighting, and he is doing all the paying, and now the hon. member would deny him this small measure of protection. It can be argued that we can fix rents upon the period previous to 1914, and upon a basis that would be quite just to the investor. Many promises were made to those who went to the front, although it was known that they would not be fulfilled. This Bill gives the Government an opportunity to do something towards having those promises fulfilled. Members opposite should realise that had the Government gone on building workers' homes, as it was proposed to do, the landlord would not be in the position he is occupying to-day. In the metropolitan area, however, the building of workers' homes has entirely ceased. We should take these facts into consideration when discussing this Bill. A home is just as essential to people as food. A person may live longer without a home than without food, but he cannot go on for long without a home. If there is a shortage of food that shortage is made up. We have our charitable institutions and other organisations of that kind to see that when the people are short of food and are likely to suffer they are supplied with their requirements. Widows who have children dependent upon them, and who cannot earn sufficient to maintain those children in food, are supplied through our votes in Parliament with a given amount of money every week to help them through their troubles.

Mr. Davy: This Bill will not make up the shortage of houses.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I admit that. The existing shortage gives investors, about whom the hon. member is so concerned, an opportunity to exact more than they are entitled to do. We certainly want more houses, for they are as essential as food. Not only should we control the rents, but we should, if possible, continue the policy of increasing the number of houses so that people may not be forced to live two or three families at once in one small house.

Mr. Davy: Would you recommend the fixing of prices for goods?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. That is the next thought I was going to express. I have had a great deal of experience as an advocate before the Arbitration Court. We argue in the court that wages must be fixed on the cost of living, the cost of house rent, etc. They are usually fixed on a three years' basis. After 12 months the court can be asked to review the wages, but a good case has to be made out before there can be any alteration in that time. The court may alter the conditions of labour, and in isolated cases alter the wages, but generally speaking the wage is fixed for three years. During that three years, rents, which form a big item in the workers' expenditure, may increase enormously. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that

rents are bound to increase if we do not build houses at the same rate as our population increases. The population is growing in Perth, and when the wages are fixed by the Arbitration Court the workers are called upon to contribute large sums of money consequent upon that increase. At the time when we are asking that the rentals that have to be paid should be taken into consideration when wages are fixed, in addition to regard being paid to the other payments the worker is called upon to make, we are inviting additional people to come here, and asking the workers to contribute more money in bringing into the State the very people who automatically bring about that increase in the rents. Let us for a moment review the immigration policy. We certainly want our population to grow. Our financial position cannot be changed unless there is an increase in the number of people to assist us in carrying the burden. We must either get people within our boundaries, or we will have to make out a case to the Federal Government—I hope it will be made through the Commission—to the end that people in other parts of Australia shall contribute something towards the enormous burdens we are carrying in our task of developing this State. That is an argument for bringing additional people into Western Australia. We know, however, that unless we go on building houses in proportion to the influx of newcomers rents will continue to go up, unless there is some control over those who own the limited number of houses. Is the investor to reap all the advantage of the immigration policy? He is getting it in the metropolitan area to-day. As our population increases so must the number of houses increase, for as the demand increases so will rents go up. In the circumstances it is reasonable to ask that some tribunal should be appointed with power to investigate the claims of house owners, just as we have a tribunal to investigate the claims of the worker for increased wages. The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) asked whether I would appoint a board to control the cost of living. I would willingly do that, and have always advocated it. I was one of those who assisted to establish a tribunal which proved that it was a practical proposition to control the cost of living. Vested interests, however, were too strong. In another place, unfortunately, the opinion was voiced against it and in favour of the investor. Thank God the voice of vested interests is not heard to such an extent in this Chamber. We are in a majority here, and cannot be dictated to as is the case in another place. The investors, however, always have a safety valve in that Chamber. When it comes to a question of fixing prices and controlling the cost of living, they exercise a mighty power, and all such control goes by the board. Because

price fixing was defeated it does not prove that it was not a just principle to follow; neither did the criticism demonstrate that it was not a practical proposition and easily administered. The penal clauses of the price fixing measure were never enforced. The results were achieved by negotiation in such a way as to bring about happy results for the working community.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I was speaking of the price-fixing measure passed by this Parliament and was contending that that Act was not vetoed because of its ineffectiveness, or on account of its administration. The administration had been highly effective and it had caused little or no irritation from the point of view of the public. I do not remember any strong criticism levelled against the Act by the Chamber of Commerce, although that body opposed the Act because it limited their profits. There were two points of view to be taken into consideration in relation to that Act, just as there are the two points of view in connection with the Bill. The traders desired to make the maximum profits from the sale of commodities they were controlling, but the price-fixing authorities regulated those profits as between the consumer and the distributor. If it is possible to regulate the prices of foodstuffs, and thus control the cost of living, how much easier will it be to regulate the prices of houses and the rents that have to be paid. It may be urged that the prices of commodities are subject to outside influences beyond the control of the State. It is admitted that it is difficult to regulate imported goods because they are subjected to varying prices and conditions that cannot be controlled in the way that we can control rents, which are not subject to outside influences. There is this to be said, however, that outside influences can be brought to bear in relation to the rate of interest paid. Money borrowed outside the State is subject to the regulation of interest, and to that extent outside influences may enter into the question. It has to be recognised that interest fluctuates and when we come to deal with the clauses referring to the rate of interest to be charged, we may make provision for some latitude in that respect. I am of the opinion that, with interest as it stands today, an 8 per cent. return on cottage property is not a sufficient margin. That, however, can be considered during the Committee stage. That is the only question that should cause any difficulty in arriving at an equitable means of controlling rents. In order to meet an objection that would be raised to the effect that the Bill would constitute a precedent, the Minister made it clear that rent fixing has been practised

throughout the world, more particularly in the British Dominions and in Britain itself. In those countries it has succeeded. The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) stated that the British Act was less ambitious than the one before the House. That is only to be expected. If the member for West Perth were to introduce a rent-fixing Bill, he would view the matter from a standpoint different from that of the Minister.

Mr. Davy: It is unthinkable that I would introduce such a Bill.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not for one moment imagine that the hon. member would do so, but I believe if he did bring forward such a measure, he would have greater regard for the investor's point of view.

Mr. Davy: Not at all.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: And the hon. member would limit it to those properties where unfair conditions actually prevailed. I assume he would take the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) as his guide as to how far the measure should go, and he would limit it to what came within his knowledge regarding practical experiences here. The Minister is not limited in his view but regards the matter from the standpoint of the community as a whole. The member for West Perth, if he brought forward such a measure, would regard the matter from a limited point of view. That would be the difference. The member for West Perth's Bill would be limited to the special interests with which he was concerned.

Mr. Davy: That is not a fair accusation to make against me. You suggest that I come here to represent the investors only.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: For the moment I do suggest that.

Mr. Davy: Then it is not fair.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I heard the hon. member's speech and he eulogised the British Act when comparing it with the Bill.

Mr. Davy: I did not.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Then why quote the Act and say it was less ambitious than the Bill?

Mr. Davy: I condemned the British measure without reserve, and said that it would be chucked out next year.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Of course the Act will be chucked out. The present British Government are more likely to do that than if the Labour Government had been in power.

Mr. Davy: The British Labour Government left it as it was, knowing that it would expire.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: They had no opportunity to do otherwise. It is not customary to anticipate the expiration of an Act by introducing legislation while the Act still remains in force. Consequently the Government would have allowed it to

continue with the intention of later on introducing a Bill that would conform more to the point of view of the Labour Party. Here again the different point of view comes in. The Lloyd George Government, in introducing the legislation to control rents, were in exactly the same position as the member for West Perth. They wanted to do something, but they wanted to limit the effect of the legislation so that it would not injure the interests they represented to any extent.

Mr. Davy: You are not right in saying that I represent any particular interests.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not judge the hon. member from any other point of view than that disclosed by his own speech.

Mr. Davy: Would I be right in saying that you are here to represent the Trades Hall only?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Certainly not. I am here to represent the community who have to pay rent and desire the Bill to be passed. Why does the hon. member oppose the Bill?

Mr. Davy: Because it will not do what is suggested.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. member, in his remarks, conveyed the idea that the Bill was more objectionable than the British measure because of its wider scope.

Mr. Davy: A bad thing is worse than another if it is greater.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: There again we differ. I say the Bill is a good thing. The member for West Perth views it from the standpoint of the investor and regards the Bill as bad. I regard it from the standpoint of the rent payer and refer to the Bill as a good one.

Mr. Davy: Why not be fair? Why suggest that I represent the investors?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am endeavouring to emphasise the views expressed by the hon. member, so that his constituents may know where he stands and will understand his definite point of view, which varies so much from that of the Minister.

Mr. Davy: I object to you saying that my views were those of someone else, whereas they were my honest opinions.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If that be so, I can say that the hon. member will have support for his views from the investors in property and from those who desire to exploit to the fullest extent the possibility of securing high rents. I do not object to the hon. member holding his point of view, but surely I am justified in pointing out my views in attempting to show that the hon. member is wrong.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But you are not doing so.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Then why does the hon. member get annoyed?

Mr. Davy: Because you said I represented the investors, whereas I was expressing my own opinion.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Then those views are in accord with those of the investors.

Mr. Latham: Have you been in consultation with them?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) argued along the same lines and repeatedly referred to statements made by the member for West Perth. They are two of a kind. Their views will have the support of the investors of Perth. The British Act was introduced by those who were not representative of the masses, because their franchise is not as broad as that for this Chamber and therefore the British Parliament that passed the Act was not as representative of the taxpayers as is this Chamber. The very Government depends on that class of the community. We never hesitate to admit that we are Labour representatives and that we appeal to the rent-payers, those whose wages are regulated by the community and who get no assistance from the law of supply and demand. It is those to whom we look for support. Therefore the Minister must introduce a Bill differing from that of Mr. Lloyd George. So I am justified in saying that the member for West Perth, being of a political faith similar to those who in the House of Commons formed the Government at that time, would support a Bill of a restricted character. The hon. member quoted Zanzibar, Palestine, Trinidad, and somewhere else, but did not quote New Zealand and South Africa.

Mr. Davy: I was not quoting them: those places were quoted by the Minister.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. member attempted to cast ridicule on the idea that the Bill could be justified by showing that measures controlling rents were in operation in Zanzibar and those other places. But the Minister by showing that similar measures were in existence even in backward countries, anticipated a more serious objection. He made it clear that similar Bills operate, not only in Britain, but in many other parts of the world. The hon. member said the British measure was a comparatively restricted Bill and was not re-enacted by the Labour Government. The Labour Government did not have an opportunity to re-enact it, and it is not likely to be re-enacted by the present British Government. But even after the Bill was passed there was a great deal of agitation regarding rents; indeed there was a revolt over the question. That revolt in a large measure contributed to the placing of the Macdonald Government on the Treasury benches. Even to-day there is a strike in Scotland against rents. So we find that the limitation of the measure has caused dissatisfaction. The agitation still exists, and possibly the Conservative Government of Britain may play to safety and reintroduce the measure, giving it a wider scope. But let us have a look at the

figures of New South Wales and Queensland quoted by the hon. member. He said the index figures supplied by Knibbs indicated that the Act of New South Wales did not prevent the increase of rent. And he went on to say that the New South Wales figures for 1920 and for 1922 showed an increase in 1922. I have gone into those figures more deeply than did the hon. member, and have endeavoured to bring them up to 1923. I find that in New South Wales the index figure in 1920 was 1415, and the average rental in the city 28s. 4d. In 1923 the index figure had increased to 1617 and the rents to 32s. 4d., being an increased rental of 4s. in the period. We can only tell whether the Act has been effective in New South Wales by comparing that State with other States of Australia where no such Act is operating. In Victoria, where there is no rent fixing, the index figure in 1920 was 1405, and in 1923 it was 1672, being an increase of 267. The rent in 1920 was 28s. 1d. and in 1923 it had risen to 33s. 5d., or an increase of 5s. 4d. during the period. Rents in New South Wales under rent control increased by 4s., whereas in Victoria, without rent control, they increased by 5s. 4d. Then we have to take into consideration the population. If the population of Victoria had increased to a greater extent than did that of New South Wales it could be said, perhaps, that the increased rental was due to increased population. But during the period under review the population of New South Wales increased by 122,695 while that of Victoria increased by only 95,960.

Mr. Davy: What was the population of Sydney and Melbourne respectively?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I cannot give that, but it would be in ratio. So, with a smaller increase in population, Victoria's rental figures increased to a greater extent by 1s. 4d. than did those of New South Wales. In Queensland in 1920 the index figure was 1061 and in 1923 it had risen to 1247, or an increase of 186. The rent in Queensland in 1920 was 21s. 3d., whereas in 1923 it has risen to 24s. 11d., or an increase of 3s. 8d. That increase in Queensland was lower than the increase in any other State of the Commonwealth, the next lowest being that of New South Wales. In Adelaide the index figure in 1920 was 1216, whereas in 1923 it has risen to 1450, or an increase of 234. The rent in 1920 was 24s. 4d., whereas in 1923 it had risen to 29s., or an increase of 4s. 8d. In Perth in 1920 the index figure was 996, whereas in 1923 it was 1124, or an increase of 228. The rent in 1920 was 18s. 4d., whereas in 1923 it was 22s. 6d., or an increase of 4s. 2d. In Hobart in 1920 the index figure was 1373, and in 1923 it was 1602. The rent in 1920 was 27s. 5d., whereas in 1923 it had risen to 32s. 1d., or an increase of 4s. 8d. During the same period the popula-

tion in Queensland increased by 56,000, in South Australia by 31,000 odd, in Western Australia by 18,000 odd, and in Tasmania by roundly 5,000. So there was an increase of population in each State. Comparing the whole of the Commonwealth we find the lowest increase in rent was the 3s. 8d. of Queensland, the next lowest being the 4s. of New South Wales. If we are to take it from the point of view of the member for West Perth we can come to no other conclusion than that the fair rents legislation in New South Wales and Queensland has been effective. From the hon. member's own side of the House members who think alike with him in politics, members elected largely by the same organisations, have agreed that there is room for a measure restricting the operations of those who have the power to exact rents from householders of the metropolitan area. So, members sitting with the member for West Perth have said that such a Bill should be introduced. And in introducing it we produce evidence to show that the measure is of a kind with measures operating in other parts of the world. Then we show that similar legislation is in existence in other States of Australia and, taking the figures of the Government Statistician, we prove that the operations of that legislation have been effective.

Mr. North: According to your figures our increase in rent has been only 2d. per week more than the increase in Sydney.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: But in Western Australia we have a great number of workers' homes, many of which were built at very low cost. I know of one such home that was built for £325, whereas to-day it is worth £600. Consequently the rent paid is based on a capital cost of £325. Such instances could be multiplied. The statistician, in computing his rental figures, must take into consideration the rent paid by those who had workers' homes built some years ago at very low cost.

Mr. Davy: But the owners of those places do not pay rent; they are repaying capital with interest. If the statistician bases his rental figures on that, his figures must be far from accurate.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I say he would have to take such places into consideration. It is rent in the broad sense, and the amount paid is very low. Those men are paying about 7s. or 8s. a week.

Mr. Davy: Do you assert that the Government Statistician treats that as rent?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not in a position to say, but in my opinion it would be taken into consideration in deciding the amount of rent paid by the people of Perth as compared with those of Sydney.

Mr. Mann: Then you are working on wrong premises.

Mr. Davy: If that is so, the whole of the Statistician's figures are valueless.

The Minister for Lands: He would regard it as rent.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I cannot say definitely that I am right, but if we discard that and consider the homes in Perth as compared with those in Sydney, and that rents here are 2d. a week dearer, the facts justify the introduction of a Fair Rents Bill. In comparison, rents here should be considerably lower.

Mr. Davy: They are.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, they are 2d. dearer.

Mr. Davy: Our rents are far lower, but the increase here has been 2d. more.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The increase during the period has been 2d. more?

Mr. Davy: We have gone ahead faster.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: We have gone ahead at about the same rate. The homes in Perth are not to be compared with those of the older cities in the Eastern States, and rents here in comparison with those in New South Wales are high. Let us take the hon. member's own argument that the relative increase here, where there is no Act, has been greater than in New South Wales, where there is an Act. Surely that shows that the Bill is justified. If it is right for an Arbitration Court to fix the wages of the worker, and if it is possible by Act of Parliament to regulate the prices of commodities, it is possible and equitable to fix a reasonable rate of rental for houses, which are essential to the welfare of the community. Supply and demand does not operate, but if it did operate and there had been no organisation of vested interests to interfere with it, those who contend that the wages of workers should be subject to the decision of the Arbitration Court must agree that the rentals permitted to be charged should be fixed by a tribunal having similar powers. I appeal to the hon. member to consider whether we should not introduce a measure to control the prices of foodstuffs. If he would support that, I should be a much stronger advocate of arbitration than I am to-day. I have had too much experience of arbitration to be very enthusiastic about it, because the worker, whose wages are fixed, is subject to the exploitation of those who are uncontrolled and can fix the cost of his living and the rental of his home without any restriction. I want as much restriction imposed on those who exploit the worker as is applied to the fixing of the worker's wages. Therefore I support the Bill, believing that it is equitable, necessary and logical.

On motion by Mr. Millington, debate adjourned.

#### BILL—MAIN ROADS.

Order of the day read for the consideration of the Bill in Committee.

To refer to Select Committee.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.6]: I move—

*That the Bill be referred to a select committee.*

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I second the motion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [8.7]: I regret that I cannot accept the motion. This matter has long been under consideration, and it is urgently necessary that a decision should be reached. The Traffic Bill should be passed this session, because we cannot allow matters affecting traffic to drift for another 12 months. The money will be collected under the Traffic Act, and the machinery should be set up for the control of main roads. I am hopeful that the whole of the machinery necessary under the Main Roads Bill will be in full operation by the middle of next year. If the Bill be referred to a select committee we shall not be able to deal with it this session, and I doubt whether an inquiry would produce much more information than is available at present. For years Parliament has been waiting for such a measure. We have something definite before us now, and members should be prepared to deal with it. Traffic legislation cannot be allowed to stand over for another 12 months. If the money is collected and nothing is done for another year, our right to collect the money might be challenged.

Mr. Latham: You will have plenty of work on which to spend the money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There will be no machinery to provide for its expenditure.

Mr. Latham: Not through the local governing Acts?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The traffic fees will be collected specifically for expenditure on main roads. I am sorry I cannot meet the hon. member's wishes, but the time is long overdue when a decision should be arrived at.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.10]: The Minister would be wise to agree to a select committee. This Bill lends itself to special inquiry. As regards the money to be collected under the Traffic Bill, the Minister will need to have some money in hand before he can put the Main Roads measure in operation. The delay that will ensue by referring the Bill to a select committee will be roughly six months. The Bill could be reintroduced early next session, so there would be no real delay in expending the money, which, of course, must be collected before the Minister can spend it.

The Minister for Works: It will take some time to create the organisation.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But meanwhile the Minister could decide upon suitable engineers, which is one of the main considerations. The local authorities should

have an opportunity to consider the Bill. I agree that the measure has been long wanted, but the difficulty is to finance the scheme. The Government will not get very much new money under this measure, though as time goes on it will increase, so no harm will result from six months delay. The measure is not perfect.

The Minister for Lands: Is any Bill perfect?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This Bill is far from perfect and we should do our best to frame a measure to meet the situation. In Committee many amendments will be moved, and consideration of them will absorb a considerable portion of the little time left this session. The Minister has been reasonable regarding this and other legislation, though very determined to put it through. Except in this instance, he has behaved quite reasonably. We have not succeeded in convincing him that he was wrong on any point, but that is his misfortune.

The Minister for Works: Your weakness.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister's weakness is that he cannot unbend. I support the motion. The Minister must realise that many people, particularly the local authorities are interested and should be given an opportunity to state their views.

The Minister for Lands: Very few local authorities would appear.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have a profound respect for members of local governing bodies. The Minister for Lands is a member of a local authority and should stand by those bodies, who are as anxious as are we to do good work.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [8.14]: I hope there will be no further delay. The roads are in such a bad state that immediate attention should be given to them. The Minister must have time to create his organisation, and if we asked another place to pass the Traffic Bill, which will impose increased taxation, without giving them the Main Roads Bill, I question whether they would do so. Another place will want a guarantee that the money so raised will be expended in a manner which they will have an opportunity of considering before passing the taxation measure. The two Bills must go together for that reason. The member for Katanning endeavoured to show that there is justification for a select committee to review this Bill because of another select committee's amendment of the Traffic Act Amendment Bill. In connection with the latter Bill, however, there was a difference of opinion regarding figures. The Minister put up figures supplied him by his officers. Members connected with local governing bodies, especially in the country districts, questioned the correctness of those figures; and some of those members were able to investigate how the measure would affect the road boards with which they are

connected. On that Bill the Minister rightly agreed to a select committee, mainly for the purpose of considering the schedule. As regards the details of the present Bill there is no argument.

Mr. Latham: There is a great deal.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: On the Notice Paper there are numerous amendments, but from the second onward they are all consequential upon the first amendment. We want to hear the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) justify his proposal as against that of the Minister. Discussion of this Bill will centre on administration, on whether the Minister's idea of expending the money through an advisory board under the Minister's direction is the right one. If the member for Swan can convince us, well and good, because this is not a party measure; but we do not want a select committee to guide us in that matter. The question is purely one to be decided according to the viewpoint of members as influenced by their experience. So there is no reason for referring the measure to a select committee. The Opposition Leader has admitted that the reference of the Bill to a select committee will kill it for this session. We do not know what is going to happen next session; we have no assurance that the work of a select committee appointed this session will be accepted by next session's Assembly. Therefore, we shall be defeating the Main Roads Bill by an indirect method while sending the Traffic Act Amendment Bill to another place. Another place will not see the Main Roads Bill, and accordingly will defeat the Traffic Act Amendment Bill. Another place will say, "We are not going to pass a measure that will give the Government power to raise increased revenue without any guarantee as to the manner in which that revenue shall be expended." I hope the two Bills will go forward together, because they are too important to be delayed.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning—in reply) [8.21]: I want to assure the Minister and the House that in suggesting a select committee I have no intention whatever of killing the Bill. However, the measure proposes so many drastic alterations, and is so totally different from the Main Roads Act of Victoria, which represents the lines on which our Road Boards Associations have been working, that even a delay of six months in this connection cannot be regarded as an injury to the State in any way whatever.

Mr. SPEAKER: I very much regret to have to draw the attention of the hon. member to Standing Order No. 120, which reads—

A reply shall be allowed to a member who has made a substantive motion to the House or moved the second reading of a Bill, but not to any member who has moved an Order of the Day (not being the second reading of a Bill), an amendment, or instruction to a committee.



Mr. THOMSON: That means, Mr. Speaker, that I am unfortunately debarred from replying?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret it, Sir, because if I had the right I would give my reasons for advocating the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has no right of reply.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	27

Majority against .. 12

#### AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Barnard	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Brown	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Davy	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomson
Mr. E. B. Johnston	Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. North
Mr. Mann	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Chesson	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Collier	Mr. Millington
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Munro
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Denton	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Heron	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. A. Wan brough
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Latham	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Willson
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

#### In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

Mr. SAMPSON: I move an amendment—

*That in the definition of "Board" the word "advisory" be struck out.*

The definition reads "the Main Roads Advisory Board constituted by this Act." The Minister has indicated that the board is to have executive power, and therefore the term "advisory" is a misnomer. We want a board of control on the lines of the board under the Victorian Country Roads Act.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I raise no objection to the deletion of the word. The board will be more than advisory, and the word "advisory" in this definition has caused a good deal of confusion. The board

will have all the power; the Minister will not be able to do anything without the board's recommendation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He will be able to under this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. The board will have both power and responsibility. The Minister cannot spend any money, cannot declare a main road, nor do any work, until the board say so.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. SAMPSON: I move a further amendment—

*That the following words be struck out:— "Chief Engineer" means the Chief Engineer of Main Roads appointed under and for the purposes of this Act."*

At a later stage an amendment will be moved reducing the number of members of the board from five to three and, following on that, argument will be brought forward that the three members should comprise two engineers, being skilled highway makers, and one skilled administrator. In that case there would be no room for the "Chief Engineer" referred to in this interpretation clause.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is moving his amendment in the wrong place. He argues that the chief engineer should not be a member of the board, but there must be a chief engineer in charge of the roads. All that the paragraph does is to give a definition of "chief engineer." It says nothing about his having a seat on the board.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I move an amendment—

*That in the definition of "petrol," the word "petroleum" be struck out.*

This, I presume, means petroleum of any kind. Surely that is not the intention of the Minister. The words "petroleum" and "benzoline" should be deleted from the definition.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This definition was arrived at after a conference with the agents, those who deal with the spirits. The definition has been copied from English and American statutes and the Committee would be well advised to leave it as it stands. Unless the definition is permitted to remain, we shall probably have considerable evasion of taxes.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am anxious that there should be no escaping the payment of taxes, but I would remind the Minister that there are carburettors that are made for the purpose of carburetting kerosene, and many cars are now being run on kerosene. At the moment, of course, kerosene is not popular.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I move an amendment—

*That in the second line of the definition of "petrol" the word "benzoline" be struck out.*

This is used only in air gas plants and also for distilling purposes, and by taxing it we shall be doing wrong.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LATHAM: In connection with the definition of petrol, the Minister is asking wide powers. He can bring under this definition "any other spirit or substance which may be declared by proclamation to be petrol." The Minister can declare any kind of substance to be petrol.

Mr. Marshall: Even whisky!

Mr. LATHAM: That would not be declared petrol while the hon. member was about. There is no need to include in the definition the words that I have quoted and therefore I move an amendment—

*That all the words after "naphtha" in line 2 be struck out.*

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At the present time there are propositions on the market for the use of substances that will take the place of petrol.

Mr. Latham: Then leave in the word "spirits" and take out the others.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Companies are in progress of formation to place the new inventions on the market and it may be that in the course of a little time the spirits mentioned in the definition will be out of date. The idea is that we may be able to proclaim any new substance that may be brought into use.

Mr. LATHAM: The proposal is that the Minister shall proclaim any of these substances. If the matter were to be left to be dealt with by regulation, Parliament then would have an opportunity of reviewing the position.

The Minister for Works: I will not object to substituting "regulation" for "proclamation."

Mr. LATHAM: Then I shall withdraw my amendment and move another.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

*That in the definition of "petrol" the word "proclamation" be struck out and "regulation" inserted in lieu.*

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 4—Main Roads Advisory Board:

Mr. SAMPSON: I move an amendment—

*That in Subclause (2) the word "five" be struck out, and "three" inserted in lieu.*

The object of the amendment is to ensure that a board of three shall be appointed

rather than one of five members. It is the universal opinion of the associations and organisations interested in the roads of the State that the Victorian Act should be followed in this respect, and that a board of five members would be too cumbersome. The whole time of the three members should be occupied in carrying out their important duties, and they should be paid accordingly. Their responsibilities will be great. If possible the Roads Board Association and the association of municipalities should be represented on the board.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: It was understood that a Bill of this nature would be based on the Victorian Act.

The Minister for Lands: There are 2,000,000 people in Victoria.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The example set by that State is a good one to follow. If there are to be three public servants on a board of five members, the Minister will hold the balance of power. It would be far better to have an independent board untrammelled by Parliamentary influence. The Bill does not say that the members of the board will devote their whole time to the work. In Victoria the members of the board are appointed for five years at certain salaries. In 1922 the chairman of the board received £1,250 a year, and individual members £900, and in New South Wales the chairman receives £1,700 a year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Swan evidently wants a board of highly paid officials. The time, however, has not yet arrived when we can afford to pay exorbitant salaries, such as are paid elsewhere. The chief engineer will be the servant of the board, and not of the Public Works Department, and will give his whole time to the work. There will also be two departmental officers on the board, and one representing the road boards, and another the municipalities. The members will be chosen for their knowledge of the requirements of the State, and the skilled staff in the employment of the board will carry out their decisions. This Bill is framed more on the South Australia legislation. Mr. W. N. Hedges told me he was much impressed by what he had seen in South Australia, and said that the plant used there upon the construction of the main highways was the most up-to-date he had come across.

Mr. Sampson: South Australia has not made the same advance as Victoria.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The system has been tried in South Australia for only two years. In the public service of this State there are many officers who are constantly travelling about and who see what is required, and their services would be of great value to the board. It would be a grave error on our part to overload the scheme. My object is to keep the administrative costs as low as possible.

I do not want to impose new traffic fees and spend a lot of the money in carrying out this scheme.

Mr. THOMSON: Will the Minister inform the Committee what the cost of the board will be? Is it necessary to have two paid officers from the Public Service with the Engineer-in-Chief when appointed as an ex-officio officer.

The Minister for Works: It is not the Engineer-in-Chief. The clause refers to the "chief engineer" to be appointed under the Act.

Mr. THOMSON: I cannot see the necessity for the two other members. Then again, why should there be three representatives of the Government as against two representatives of the local authorities?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The amendment is important because it will decide the question whether the Minister is to control the board—that is to say, whether it will be a departmental board—or whether it will be an executive board doing the work that is necessary. It is useless for the Minister to suggest that we can have administration without cost. We must see that we get full value for our money. Under the Bill the Minister will be all-powerful.

The Minister for Lands: And so the Minister should be!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then, this will be a departmental board. It will be simply advisory and the Minister will be in charge. If we are to have a board such as that operating in Victoria, members must approve of the amendment. The Minister's board is to be purely advisory. If the public are to be asked to shoulder this financial burden, the board should be given power so that the best interests of the people shall be conserved and good roads provided. Such a board will give better results than if we have merely a departmental advisory board as proposed by the Minister. I trust that members will vote for the amendment and give a clear indication to the Minister that we want an executive board.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: If you want good roads, you must pay for them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so, but we must get full value for our money and the Victorian system is the better.

The Minister for Lands: You would never expect to carry on in Western Australia under the Victorian Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know that I would not.

The Minister for Lands: If you were Treasurer you would not dream of doing so. Would you borrow millions of money as they did in Victoria? Would you do that for the purpose of making good roads with our small population of 360,000? Of course you would not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister surprises me.

The Minister for Lands: You know you would do nothing of the sort.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I always hesitated about this Bill because I did not know how it could be financed. The Minister for Works has shown how it is to be done. He makes no bones about it. He says "Here is the Bill, you must pay for the roads." The Minister thoroughly enjoys taxing the people. The board will mean that the Minister will be able to appoint a majority and should any of the Ministers' representatives be absent, he can appoint others to represent them and so retain a majority.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Minister claims he desires to keep down expenses. When the board was started in Victoria, the salaries paid amounted to £2,000 a year. What we advocate is a smaller and less expensive board than that proposed by the Minister himself.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am wondering whether we ought not have a full debate on the question whether we shall establish a highly paid board and set up an expensive staff, as suggested by the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson), or whether we should stick to the principle contained in the Bill. The proposals of the member for Swan will cost us at least from £15,000 to £20,000 per annum. My proposition is to have a board of five members, three of whom shall be Government officials, the other two being representative of the local authorities. That will not be by any means an expensive board. On the Scaffolding Bill, protest after protest came from members opposite against the setting up of a new Government department with increased expenditure.

Mr. Latham: Do you propose to pay this board out of the money derived under the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Decidedly.

Mr. Latham: Then a board of five must be more expensive than a board of three.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Chief Engineer will be the only fully paid officer. The idea of the member for Swan is that it shall be a board devoting full time to the expenditure of the available money. The frequent occurrence of the word "Minister" in the Bill has been pointed to. I asked the Crown Law Department to delete the word "Minister" wherever possible, for I certainly have no desire to accept any responsibility under the Bill. However, the Crown Law Department pointed out that if the work was to be done by the Public Works Department it was necessary that in the Bill the responsibility should be thrown on the Minister. What I am utterly against is the setting up of duplicate machinery for public services.

Mr. Latham: You have already the machinery in your roads and bridges branch.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is what I say; we have in the Public Works Department the roads and bridges branch, and we do not want it duplicated. The suggestion of the member for Swan, is to set up an independent board and establish another roads and bridges branch. I do not want that.

Mr. Latham: I do not see that you want the Bill at all. You have all the necessary machinery already.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I want the board to control the expenditure of the available money, and practically take over the roads and bridges branch of the Works Department. If the proposal of the member for Swan be carried out we shall still have the engineers of the roads and bridges branch at work in the country and in addition we shall have the staff of this independent board doing similar work. Whenever a local authority want assistance they send to the Works Department for the loan of an engineer. That is being done every day in the week, and as a result our engineers are out all over the State. I am altogether opposed to any duplication of public services.

Mr. Thomson: What will be the cost of the board under your scheme as against that suggested by the member for Swan?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Under the Bill there should be but very little additional expense, whereas the proposal of the member for Swan will mean anything from £15,000 to £20,000 per annum. Under the Bill the board will have full control and the Minister will simply do as he is told. I hope the Committee will not saddle the people of the State with unnecessary expense by creating an additional staff. I wish to ensure that the money, instead of being paid away in salaries, is spent on the roads.

Mr. THOMSON: The discussion shows the need for referring the Bill to a select committee. Neither the Minister nor the member for Swan can tell us what the board is likely to cost.

The Minister for Lands: What does the Fire Brigades Board cost?

Mr. THOMSON: Give me a chance. We are asked to agree to a Bill that is going to cost the State an immense amount of money, perhaps £20,000 a year.

Mr. Latham: What is the question before the Chair?

The CHAIRMAN: The question is that "five" be struck out with a view to inserting "three," but as this amendment will decide practically the whole of the amendments of which the member for Swan has given notice, I am allowing considerable latitude in the discussion.

Mr. THOMSON: When the Scaffolding Bill was before us I twitted the Minister about creating a new department, and I hesitate now to agree to the establishment

under this Bill of a department that will probably swallow up the bulk of the funds raised. What is the necessity for having an engineer and two civil servants on the board? The members of the board will be appointed by the Minister, and the road boards will have no say at all. Under the clause two members will be appointed by the local authorities. Considering the enormous areas administered by road boards, they should have more than one representative on the board.

The CHAIRMAN: The question of nominations occurs later in the clause.

Mr. THOMSON: But so much hinges upon this question. The great bulk of the revenue will be raised by the local authorities, and I wish to be satisfied as to the representation the local authorities would have under the amendment proposed by the member for Swan. I take it they will have none. If that is so, I prefer a board on which the local authorities would have representation. It is intended to impose a land tax of a halfpenny in the pound.

Mr. Marshall: What has that to do with the amendment?

Mr. THOMSON: We should discuss the broad aspect. According to the taxation returns, the total value of land in the metropolitan area is £10,506,766, and in the country £11,963,172.

The Minister for Lands: The metropolitan area has been enlarged under this measure, and that is not shown in the taxation returns.

Mr. THOMSON: Including Crown leases, there is a preponderance in favour of the country of £6,311,606. Consequently the country districts will pay much more than the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The country will pay £53,000 and the metropolitan area £32,000.

Mr. THOMSON: I cannot support the amendment, but I hope it will be possible for the country districts to get another representative on the board. Without knowing what either of the boards will cost, how can we cast an intelligent vote?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not objecting to the Minister having statutory power. The board must have a head, and the head must be a Minister. What we want is a board as the executive authority to do the work. The Minister says he wants the Works Department to do the work. I do not think the Works Department should do it, because the cost will be greater than if it were done by the board. The board will consist of engineers assisted by a financial adviser, and work done by the board will cost less than work done by the Public Works Department. The member for Katanning is deceiving himself if he thinks otherwise. It would be better to have the board perfectly independent. We were anxious that this work should be done by men specially appointed for it. The Public

Works Department are fully employed already. We all know that practically the whole of the work now done by the Public Works Department on roads and bridges will be delegated to the Board. There will not be much for the roads and bridges branch of the Public Works Department to do under this measure. If, as the Minister says, the cost of administration under the board will be less than 5 per cent., it will be less than the Public Works Department's cost of administration. The people of this country can take it from me that the cost will be no more if the work is done by this special board than if it is done by the department.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No one who has taken an active interest in local government can fail to be concerned about a Bill of this nature. I was very pleased to see the clause in question in the Bill. Whenever the measure is being discussed, we are told of what is done in Victoria; but that is pure humbug, because Victoria has two millions of people while we have 360,000. Our aim should be to put as little increased taxation as possible on the people.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Come over here!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am surprised to see how low the Minister has kept the cost of administration. A board of professional men would immediately put in huge demands for money. But our State is so large and our people are so poor that we cannot pay for all the roads required in Western Australia. From the report of a meeting held to-day I gathered that the meeting had an idea that the Government would borrow several millions of money for road construction. But that is something the Government cannot possibly do. We must realise that our population is small and that thousands of miles of road require to be constructed. Moreover, our small population is scattered, involving a huge mileage of roads for which we are not in a position to pay. The proposals under the Bill, however, are spread over a number of years. While the Commonwealth provides £96,000—a sop I called it the other day—yet I think it would be better if the Federal Parliament reduced its taxation a little. This State pays double what it gets from the Commonwealth. Moreover, there is £96,000 to be found by the State.

Mr. Latham: But we are receiving special consideration.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nothing of the sort. We have more roads to make than the other States, and we pay more revenue to the Federation than the other States pay. Then, too, we have to pay the cost of administration. So what have we left for developmental roads? And what is the use of a main road to a man if he is a mile away from it and has no means of getting to it?

Mr. Thomson: That is why we are objecting to the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What hon. members object to is paying under this Bill. They want main roads if those roads can be got without being paid for. I do not blame the road boards in this connection, because they know what it means to make roads and then to impose rates to pay for them. In Western Australia more than in any other part of the world the people expect something for nothing, expect the Government to find everything. The member for Katanning asked how the board under this Bill is to be managed. But we have the experience of the Fire Brigades Board.

Mr. Latham: But that board has not the handling of this amount of money.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some members of the Fire Brigades Board are appointed by the local authorities. The members are paid so much per sitting, and country members receive, in addition, railway passes. I want hon. members to bear in mind that we still have some honest men in the Public Service.

Mr. Sampson: There has been no reflection on the Public Service.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; but hon. members object to the appointment of public servants on this board for the reason that public servants will do in every instance what the Minister tells them to do. If a member of the board is an engineer, he is going to cast his engineering knowledge to the winds at the behest of the Minister; and similarly, if the member is an administrator, he will cast his knowledge of administration from him in order to do whatever the Minister desires. However, the Minister merely directs policy, and does not direct administration. One reason why it will be a good thing to have the board under the control of the Minister is that this will stop members of Parliament from interfering with the board.

Mr. Sampson: That is an argument in favour of my proposal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; because a statutory board will be an expensive board. If, as proposed by the Bill, this board consists of five members, there will be members representing the people who have to find the money. Members elected by the municipalities and road boards will point out to other members of the board the advisableness of economical working. I am doubtful whether there will be a representative of the metropolitan area on the board.

Mr. Latham: I think there will be two.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The municipalities that will contribute a large amount to the fund not only by way of land tax, but also by way of vehicle fees, will have scarcely any roads that will require to be constructed. Therefore, most of the

expenditure will be in the country. We must cut down the cost because our population is small and we must construct roads by degrees. We are not in the position to borrow millions for the purpose of road construction. I am pleased to say that when I saw the Bill first, I regarded it as being exceedingly liberal, and that the taxation had been kept down to the minimum.

Mr. Latham: We do not know even yet what it is going to cost.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The board is to consist of three skilled men, two to be skilled engineers and one a skilled administrator.

Mr. Sampson: You want a skilled highway expert.

Mr. Latham: Your skilled men may know nothing of road construction.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The public officers will put their views before the Minister in a fair and open way. The board, as proposed in the Bill, will carry on for many years until our population increases, and make no mistake about it, our population is going to increase. When that happens, we can set aside the organisation of to-day and build up a new one.

Mr. WITHERS: I support the provision that the board shall consist of five members, but the local bodies in my district are concerned as to the representation they are to have. If the figures submitted by the member for Katanning are correct, the outskirts will not be given an opportunity of having a voice in the administration that they expected to have. Three will be representative of the metropolitan area, and if it should come to a vote, the country will be outvoted. The local authorities in the South-West have suggested the appointment of another representative over and above the five. I do not know whether it would be wise to go so far, but we should have an assurance from the Minister that outside governing bodies will have fair representation on the board. I come from a district that realises the need that exists for a Bill of this description and when the board is constituted it is hoped that it will turn its attention to the south-western part of the State.

Mr. LATHAM: I have not heard an argument as to why the boards should not be reduced in number. I may inform the member for Bunbury that when boards of this kind are created there is always more representation for the metropolitan area than for country districts, because all the officers are located in the metropolis and are continually driving over the roads of the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Lands: I do not know why you do not want to sack all the officers!

The Premier: The I.A.B. sits here. Do they not give a fair deal to the country?

Mr. LATHAM: They do not advance money in the city of Perth.

The Premier: But they give a fair deal to the country.

Mr. LATHAM: I know that pressure will be brought to bear on the main roads board when it is appointed, by the metropolitan people.

The Minister for Works: There will not be any pressure.

Mr. LATHAM: There are roads in other parts of the State that are in shocking condition and about which the Minister does not hear anything.

The Minister for Works: I wish you would change places with me.

Mr. LATHAM: When the Minister goes out into the country he then learns something about the bad state of the roads.

The Minister for Works: I think the worst road in this State leads into my electorate from Armadale.

Mr. LATHAM: And I have no doubt that a good deal of the money when it is available will be spent on that road. Continual agitation will bring about an unfair distribution of this money. What I wish to see is three representatives of local authorities appointed and then to allow the engineers to do the work. After all, this should be only an advisory board. The trouble that the Minister finds himself up against to-day is that he has not enough money to do the work that requires to be carried out. As a matter of fact the Bill is not wanted; all that is needed is to raise a little more money to give the Minister something to spend and I am sure he would spend it wisely. There are only two clauses in the Bill that are vital, one that gives power to raise money and the other that provides the administration. I know that the Minister is anxious to get in more money so as to construct some roads. I am with him there, but what I want to see is that what might be called ornamental expenditure is kept down. We shall not get value for the board if it is proposed to appoint under the Bill. Our engineers are better qualified to advise where money should be spent than any board we can appoint. In reply to the Minister for Lands, I may say we have one-sixteenth of the population of Australia in this State and have been granted one-fifth of the total vote available for developmental roads in Australia.

The Premier: But the matter is one of area.

Mr. LATHAM: Just the same, we have more than our proportionate share of the money on the basis of the number of our taxpayers. In the return recently placed on the Table it is shown that the unimproved value of land outside the metropolitan area is £24,900,000.

Mr. Marshall: On a point of order. Is the hon. member in order?

The CHAIRMAN: I have allowed latitude because of the all-embracing nature of the amendment. However, I hope the hon.

member will confine himself to that amendment.

Mr. LATHAM: The member for Swan made out a good case for a board of three as against one of five, but I should prefer to see no board at all, leaving it to the Minister.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister for Works has said that the board proposed by me would mean practically another department, with consequent duplication of work. On the second reading I pointed out it would be possible for the Minister to appoint to the board officers of the Works Department, so I do not see that there would be duplication under that suggestion. No reflection whatever has been intended to be cast on the officers of the department. But there can be no question of the necessity for having a board with power to carry out the work. The salaries to be paid will have to be determined later. The Minister has publicly said that, having regard to the amount of money to be spent, it would be wise to pay a high salary to the Engineer-in-Chief and so secure the best possible man. We may with equal truth say that those to constitute the board under the Bill should be well paid. Also the Minister has often suggested that the local authorities should give him their best advice. After long consideration the Road Boards Association recommended that a Bill on the lines of the Victorian Act should be brought down. Notwithstanding this the Minister has declined that advice and proposed a board of five. There can be no question that the suggested board of three will be occupied full time. The board must have freedom of action, with power to initiate and carry out works. There is in the Bill a most desirable provision for the letting of contracts to the local authorities. That provision is more likely to be carried into effect by an untrammelled board of three than if a board consisting of Public Works officials, as contemplated in the Bill, is appointed.

The Minister for Works: Are not the local authorities getting those contracts now?

Mr. SAMPSON: I understand not. I met the Kellerberrin road board a little while ago, and they told me the Minister had refused to give them a contract.

The Minister for Works: That is quite wrong. All I did was to decline to allow them to sublet a contract.

Mr. SAMPSON: Obviously a board of three will be less costly than one of five. I take it the administration will receive adequate salaries.

Mr. Thomson: What is an adequate salary for a reliable engineer?

Mr. SAMPSON: Perhaps £1,000 or £1,500. I trust members will give effect to the considered opinion of the Road Boards Association.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I oppose the amendment. The country is crying out for this

measure and the proposal of the Government is quite fair. If the local authorities have two representatives on the board, nothing could be fairer. If the amendment were accepted, we would have no guarantee that the local authorities would have any representation on the board.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	25

Majority against .. 14

#### AYES.

Mr. Barnard	Mr. Panton
Mr. Davy	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Mann	Mr. C. P. Wansbrough
Sir James Mitchell	Mr. Latham
Mr. North	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Brown	Mr. Millington
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Corboy	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Troy
Mr. Heron	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lindsay	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.36 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 4th December, 1924.*

	PAUSE
Bills: Fire Brigades Act Amendment, 3R.	2145
Supply (No. 2) £2,150,000, 3R.	2145
Stamp Act Amendment, 3R.	2145
Closer Settlement, recommital	2145
Forests Act Amendment, 2R.	2154
Warroona-Lake Clifton Railway, Com., report	2155
Pearling Act Amendment, 2R.	2155
Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, Com.	2157

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.